

CATULLUS 64: THE GAME OF NAMES

by

RADOSŁAW PIĘTKA

The abundance of themes in Catullus' famous poem is astounding: the journey, love, time, memory, war, death, bliss and mourning, the wedding and the funeral, men and gods... And it cannot pass unnoticed that these diverse threads are connected together by specific bonds of divergences, ambivalence, and similarities emphasised by some recurring motifs, such as images of the sea, uprooted trees, slain bulls or the contrasted colours of white and red¹. There are numerous considerations relating to the very structural pattern of the whole poem as well; scholars and readers use the metaphors of a labyrinth² (or a dream-like labyrinth³), a mirror⁴, a ring⁵, a Chinese box⁶, and fractals⁷. They have also divided the poem into seven parts (or

¹ On *poikilia* in poem 64 see F. KLINGNER, *Catullus Peleus-Epos*, in: IDEM, *Studien zur griechischen und römischen Literatur*, Zürich 1964, pp. 213–216. Cf. also G.W. MOST, *On the Arrangement of Catullus' Carmina Maiora*, *Philologus* CXXV 1981, p. 120. For other examples of diversity in the poem see, e.g., D. KONSTAN, *Catullus' Indictment of Rome: The Meaning of Catullus 64*, Amsterdam 1977, pp. 89–99 (chapter IX: "Some Imagery: Flowers, Trees, Wind and Light"); J.M. DUBAN, *Verbal Links and Imagistic Undercurrent in Catullus 64*, *Latomus* XXXIX 1980, pp. 777–802.

² See J.H. GAISSER, *Threads in the Labyrinth: Competing Views and Voices in Catullus 64*, *AJPh* CXVI 1995, pp. 579–616; E. THEODORAKOPOULOS, *Catullus 64: Footsteps in the Labyrinth*, in: A.R. SHARROCK (ed.), *Intratextuality: Greek and Roman Textual Relations*, Oxford 2000, pp. 115–141; M. SCHMALE, *Bilderreigen und Erzähllabyrinth. Catullus Carmen 64*, München–Leipzig 2004, esp. pp. 42 f. One may even notice some textual bends in that labyrinth: the first turn in the plot, for instance, is marked by the extremely strong poetical effect of triple anaphora and polyptoton in lines 19–21 (on which see J. EVRARD-GILLIS, *La récurrence lexicale dans l'œuvre de Catulle: étude stylistique*, Paris 1976, pp. 201 f.).

³ See Ch. HIGGINS, *In Love's Labyrinth*, *The Guardian*, 6 Oct. 2007 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/oct/06/featuresreviews.guardianreview34>).

⁴ See KLINGNER, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 207.

⁵ See D.A. TRAILL, *Ring-Composition in Catullus 64*, *CJ* LXXVI 1981, pp. 232–241.

⁶ See D.F.S. THOMSON, *Catullus. Edited with a Textual and Interpretative Commentary*, Toronto 1997, p. 387.

⁷ See THEODORAKOPOULOS, *op. cit.* (n. 2), p. 120.